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## THE ETEOCRETAN INSCRIPTION FROM PSYCHRO

The importance of the short yet complete digraphic text from Psychro is manifold. It consists of four lines, the first three of which are written in Greek alphabetic letters, while the fourth is incised on the stone in the old Minoan syllabic script. It is remarkable that the ancient syllabic script was still remembered and used in this part of Crete as late as about 300 B. C.

The Psychro inscription reads as follows:

ΕΠΙΘΙ  
ΖΗΘΑΝΘΗ  
ΕΝΕΘΗ ΠΑΡΣΙΦΑΙ  
*i-pi-ti*

C. H. Gordon made the initial breakthrough towards understanding this text. His reading and interpretation of the text was as follows:

ΕΠΙΘΙ  
Ζ ΗΘΑΝΘΗ  
Ε ΝΕΘΗ ΠΑΡΣ ΙΦΑΙ  
*i-pi-ti*

The engraved monument  
which I have set  
over my resting place in Land of Beauty (= Elysian Fields).<sup>1</sup>  
The engraved monument.

The last line, *i-pi-ti*, was interpreted by Gordon as a repetition in the ancient syllabary of the first line. But Gordon was not satisfied with his reading of the third line, and was hopeful that his suggestions "may help others get closer to the truth"<sup>2</sup>.

While working on this text I was surprised that this votive or funerary inscription contains no personal names, for we know from numerous other texts of this type that they usually contain one or more

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Gordon, *Evidence for the Minoan Language*, Ventnor, N. J., 1966, 13—15

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 14

personal names. In fact, it is difficult to find such texts which contain no personal names. My reading of this text, with its transliteration into "Phoenician" format, is as follows:

ΕΠΙΘΙ	= HPTWH
Z HΘANΘH	= Z YTNTY
ENETH ΠΑΡ ΣΙΦΑΙ	= 'ANTY BR SPY
<i>i-pi-ti</i>	= HPTWH

The engraved monument  
which I have donated  
ENETH son of Sippai.  
The engraved monument.

The first word, ΕΠΙΘΙ, was analyzed by Gordon as corresponding to Phoenician *hpth* 'the engraved monument'. To this interpretation we can now add the Hebrew cognate *pittûah* 'engraved stone, engraving'<sup>3</sup>. It is significant that the Hebrew vocalization of this noun was originally *pittûh*, and that it was changed by the Massoretic tradition to *pittûah* by the addition of a short /a/ vowel before the final laryngeal consonant. This short vowel facilitated pronunciation and, more importantly, prevented the dropping of the final /h/. Otherwise, the form might have been *pittû*, or even *pitti*- just as in the Eteocretan vocalization. Furthermore, the Egyptian term for Memphis, *Ht-k3-ptḥ*, 'House of the Ka of (the god) Ptah', written in Akkadian cuneiform in the Amarna letters as *Hikuptah*, was transmitted into Ugaritic in the somewhat surprising form *Hkpt*, with the loss of the final /h/. At Ugarit, then, this name was probably pronounced *Hikup(i)ti*, 'Egypt'. It was evidently this vocalization of the name that was transmitted directly into Mycenaean Greek, in the form of the personal name *Ai-ku-pi-ti-yo* found on a Linear B tablet from Knossos (KN Db 1105 + X 1446). This is significant because we know of direct maritime routes between Ugarit and Mycenaean Crete in the Late Bronze Age, and it is no surprise to find the Ugaritic vocalization in a borrowed Oriental name. *Aikupitiyo* 'The Egyptian' is, of course, the same name as Homeric Greek *Aigyptios* in Odyssey 2.15<sup>4</sup>. Both Mycenaeans and Ugaritians, then, heard Egyptian *ptḥ* as *p(i)ti*.

The second line of the text is to be interpreted, as suggested by Gordon, as Z HΘANΘH, corresponding to the Phoenician form *z ynt*

<sup>3</sup> See Zachariah 3:9. Aside from Phoenician, *pth* also occurs in Ugaritic Text No. 1151, with the meaning of engraved monument or door.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica*, Leiden 1967, 81, 340

(*ʔi yatanti*), 'which I have donated'. It is also possible, however, to regard this line as *ʔi yaʔan'ati*, 'which I have erected'. In this case the verb would be *ʔn'a*, 'to erect, establish, bring offering', as opposed to *yʔn*, 'to donate'<sup>5</sup>.

The problematic third line of the text is, I believe, to be interpreted as a personal name. The first element, ENETH, does not lend itself to an easy identification, but Punic names like 'ANTHN (with *aleph*) may be possible parallels<sup>6</sup>. Other parallels may be Biblical names like 'ANTWT (with '*ayin*')<sup>7</sup>, which would mean that the Eteocretan name appeared in Northwest Semitic in the form 'ANTY or 'ANT'A. The second element of the name corresponds to Aramaic *bar* 'son'. This noun also occurs rarely in Biblical Hebrew instead of the common Hebrew form *bēn*<sup>8</sup>. The writing of words with /p/ instead of /b/ is not unusual in dialectal forms. In the Aramaic magical bowls, for example, TWP is sometimes written for TWB 'again'<sup>9</sup>. The last element of the name brings to mind the Biblical Hebrew name Sippai, a Philistine(!) hero and colleague of Goliath who was also born to the Rephaim at Gath, and was killed by one of David's heroes at Gezer<sup>10</sup>.

The fourth line of this text is indeed a repetition of the first line, in the ancient syllabic script, most likely to serve as emphasis attesting the importance of the monument, which was either votive or funerary.

The significance of this short text is outstanding, for we now have a complete text in Eteocretan dated to the Hellenistic Era which we can read in full. Its language appears to be what we call Northwest Semitic, and what the ancient Greeks would have termed Phoenician. Furthermore, the continuity of the ancient Minoan traditions of Crete among the Eteocretans of the Hellenistic period is demonstrated not only by the palaeography of the inscription, but also by the linguistic continuity in which Minoan *pi-te* 'engraved monument'<sup>11</sup> was still used by the Eteocretans in the form *pi-ti* = ΠΙΘΙ.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. H. Donner & W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, Wiesbaden 1966—69, texts 48:1; 153:1

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 97:3

<sup>7</sup> See Nehemiah 10:20; I Chronicles 7:8; 8:24

<sup>8</sup> See Psalms 2:12; Proverbs 31:2

<sup>9</sup> Cf. W. H. Rossell, *A Handbook of Aramaic Magical Texts*, Ringwood, Borogh, N. J., 1953, 16; Gordon, *op. cit.* 14 n. 33, noted Mandaic *pat* for *bat* 'daughter'.

<sup>10</sup> I Chronicles 20:4. The Bible also gives a variant of this name as Sap, in II Samuel 21:18.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon, *op. cit.* 14, 30